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be made more powerful by magical means or the ritual acts of relatives. Although these often entail great labour and expense, parents seldom neglect their duty; in fact, care for their children is one of the strongest Bella Coola characteristics, though the methods used are so foreign to the white man that he has difficulty in realizing their meaning. The hope of both parents is to have children to carry on their names; infanticide is unknown and the death of an infant is mourned almost as much as that of an adult. Sterility and impotency are frequent causes for divorce.

At the present time there is a high birth-rate in Bella Coola, although the heavy infant mortality prevents any appreciable increase in the population. In the old days, it is said, there were always large families, though much confidence cannot be placed in this statement. In families where there are several children, the first-born, whether boy or girl, assumes an important position. His or her influence, as eldest, is naturally considerable, and the parents foster this through the vague feeling that it is proper for the eldest to be the most important in the family. In adult years, and after marriage, the influence of the eldest of a family continues to have considerable weight with younger brothers and sisters.

If a man is poor he cannot hope to have more than one wife, and his family circle will be limited to their children, and perhaps to elderly parents. On the other hand, a wealthy and powerful man usually has a larger family. Not only may he have several wives, but his aged relatives, and those of his wife, look to him for support and assistance. Such are usually welcome to live in his house; they lend what aid they can in collecting food, and it gratifies a man's pride and sense of power to be closely surrounded by a large family. The Bella Coola are, on the whole, considerate to their aged relatives.[10]

[10] This is not true of the present. During the winter of 1923-4 a feeble old man, living alone, was often in actual want of food. Disliked and degraded, of a mean disposition himself, none of his surviving relatives, of whom the nearest were nephews, would take him into their houses. Commenting on this man's fate, several informants pointed out how, in the old days, such a one could have found

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CHAPTER VII

BIRTH, ADOLESCENCE, MARRIAGE

Birth—Childhood Instruction—Puberty Rites—Marriage

Birth

IT was impossible to obtain definite data on the fertility of Bella Coola women, or on the period elapsing between marriage and the birth of the first child. Sterility is rare, though by no means unknown; on the other hand, there are several families with as many as eight or nine children. The changed conditions which have followed the advent of the white man seem to have had little influence on the high birth-rate, although infant mortality has increased enormously. Within the last few years this has diminished, so that the Bella Coola are now holding their own. Children are always desired, and although methods of abortion and infanticide have been known for many years, neither practice seems to have been sufficiently common to have produced an appreciable effect on the population.

Pregnancy usually occurs during the year following marriage. Though its actual dependence upon coition is fully realized, yet the Bella Coola, religiously minded in this as in all other aspects of life, ascribe the condition to the four *Mesmesälänx* acting on the behest of *Älquntäm*. It is believed that the Carpenters carve out the child who is to be born in the same way that a human craftsman manufactures some complicated object. Most individuals do not theorize to any extent upon the course of biological development, but are content to assume that *Älquntäm* has made the coming birth possible.

During pregnancy the expectant mother must observe certain restrictions. If she chews gum, she will have a difficult delivery; if she eats salmon tails, the feet of the infant will appear before the head, and although skilled assistants can usually rotate a child, this is a painful process which should be avoided.

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as easy as possible. Women seldom experience difficulty and suffer, on the whole, less than do white mothers. It is believed that *Sxaiaxwax*, though invisible, is present on every occasion; the rendering of assistance at childbirth is his one kindly act.

The umbilical cord was formerly cut with a mussel shell, but for many years the use of a metal knife has been customary. The after-birth usually comes away easily, but if there is delay, hot ashes are placed around the feet and at the back of the woman to accelerate its expulsion. It is immediately buried or placed beneath a large tree in the forest; if burnt, the infant will always be weakly. While one of the assistants disposes of it, another washes the new-born child. The cloths and dishes used for this purpose are burnt; failure to do so is believed to cause the child to become blind through a white film forming over the eyeballs. Then the mother and midwives return to the house with the infant, who is a source of tremendous interest to the community. It is proper for the father to recompense the attendants at once, in accordance with their skill and his generosity. A woman who has had several children often assists the daughter of a friend, then, as she gains more experience, her reputation grows and her help is more commonly sought. At the time of this study, 1922, the sum of $2.50 was considered suitable recompense for a fairly proficient midwife.

A new-born child takes the breast readily and a mother would be considered harsh indeed if she failed to suckle her infant whenever it cried, since scientific hours for feeding are not known. A child is wrapped in a shawl or a blanket and carried by the mother wherever she goes; when in the house it sprawls contentedly on the floor, unhampered by clothing. When the umbilical cord falls, it is preserved by the mother. Soon after birth, the parents make provision for their child's welfare by magical means (I, p. 700). The heavy infantile death-rate of the Bella Coola cannot be attributed to lack of love or care on the part of parents, but the attention lavished is commonly not of the kind that assists a weakly child to survive the perils of infancy.